



[engelsk]

# Type 2 diabetes (Diabetes type 2)

## About diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is our commonest metabolic disease. Type 2 diabetes is a chronic disease in which the level of sugar in the blood is higher than normal. This happens when the body produces insufficient or ineffective insulin. Most people with type 2 diabetes have what is known as insulin resistance, meaning that the insulin in their body doesn't work as it should.

Type 2 diabetes typically affects adults over the age of 30, but because overweight and obesity are becoming more common at an early age, the disease is now increasingly affecting teenagers and people in their twenties.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of type 2 diabetes may be vague and barely noticeable, so many people may have type 2 diabetes for years without realising.

If your blood sugar gets too high, sugar appears in your urine. This causes an increase in urine volume and frequent urination. The body responds by making you thirsty. Sugar excretion in your urine results in loss of calories and so often causes unintended weight loss. Urinary tract infections and itching in the groin area may also be symptoms of diabetes. In many people who develop type 2 diabetes, the symptoms develop so slowly they go unnoticed. Eventually, however, the metabolic changes will affect all bodily functions so the person feels weak, tired and depressed. These are the typical complaints when onset of the disease happens in mid-life.

## Where can I get help?

Once the diagnosis has been made by your doctor, you and your doctor together will decide the type of treatment best for you. Most people can start by making changes to their lifestyle, and the effect of this will then be assessed after a few months. A diet low in fast-acting carbohydrates, weight loss if you are overweight, and increased physical activity will often result in a significant fall in your blood sugar level. If your blood sugar is very high at the time of diagnosis, and your doctor decides that a change in lifestyle will not be of much benefit, you may be prescribed tablets or insulin injections from the start.

It is important to be aware that you are entitled to training in managing your disease. The introductory course is required to stretch over a total of at least 7 hours. The course is run by health professionals, and covers topics such as disease information, types of treatment, self-care, coping, rights and further follow-up.

Within the Norwegian Diabetes Association, you will meet other people in the same situation as you, and we will be able to give you useful information to make it easier for you to live with diabetes. For more information, visit [www.diabetes.no](http://www.diabetes.no).

## Self-monitoring

You will need to be able to monitor your blood sugar yourself. Needs and targets for blood sugar control, and how to use the readings obtained, vary from one person to the next and should be discussed with your doctor.

But it is just as important to educate yourself about your disease. You won't be able to learn everything all in one go, and achieving good diabetes control may take time. Your fasting blood sugar should ideally be 4-6 mmol/l, and preferably lower than 10 mmol/l a couple of hours after a meal.

### **Treatment**

Improved methods of treatment and greater understanding of the importance of a healthy diet, physical activity and self-care reduce the chances of developing severe complications.

The four cornerstones of diabetes care are:

- motivation/knowledge
- diet
- physical activity
- medication as and when required

In addition, for tobacco users, quitting is important for good diabetes management.

### **Coping with diabetes**

If you have just been diagnosed with diabetes, there is a lot to learn and understand. Your doctor should be a good source of support, but for most of the time you will have to deal with your disease on your own. This is why it is important to learn to manage your diabetes. Diabetes shouldn't prevent you from enjoying a good and long life. Most of the responsibility for achieving this rests with you, but the health service is also there to help you with education and information.

Some people may feel shame and guilt about having type 2 diabetes, and may want to hide their disease from other people. The fact that type 2 diabetes is often called a "lifestyle disease" doesn't make it any easier to accept that you have the condition.

But: recent research has shown that heredity is also a key factor for onset of type 2 diabetes and it is important for doctors and other health professionals to point this out and reduce feelings of "only having yourself to blame".

### **What is low blood sugar (a hypo/hypoglycaemia)?**

If your blood sugar value is less than 4 mmol/l you are hypoglycaemic. The symptoms or complaints suffered by people with diabetes when their blood sugar gets too low are known as a hypo or hypoglycaemic attack: sweating, trembling, agitation, hunger, fear, irritability and rapid heartbeat. The symptoms vary from person to person and may also change over time. Insulin and some types of tablets used in treating type 2 diabetes may cause low blood sugar and bring on a hypo, but with tablet therapy, severe hypos are very rare. If they do happen, it is usually as a result of a significant change in diet without a corresponding reduction in the tablet dose, or if the person is seriously ill or is taking other tablets that increase the effect of the tablets for lowering blood sugar.

### **Complications**

Uncontrolled diabetes, meaning high blood sugar over several years, may result in diabetes complications. People with diabetes have a higher risk of

- Kidney disease
- Heart attack and stroke
- Diabetic sores and lesions on the blood vessels of the legs
- Damage to the small blood vessels in the eyes, which may lead to impaired vision and blindness
- Peripheral neuropathy with reduced sensation and/or pain in the legs
- Impotence in men
- Gum diseases and infections of the mouth

Regular monitoring and effective treatment from an early stage can delay and prevent complications. The Norwegian Diabetes Association has also published a factsheet on diabetes complications.

This factsheet from the Norwegian Diabetes Association (Diabetesforbundet) was last updated in 2013.